

Message Text

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FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY JOHN RICHARDSON

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, BE

SUBJECT: NEW YORK CITY PERFORMANCE OF BEJART BALLET, JUNE 2, 1976

1. EMBASSY REQUESTS YOUR ASSISTANCE WITH URGENT PROBLEM
BROUGHT TO OUR ATTENTION BY MAURICE HUISMAN, DIRECTOR
BELGIUM'S THEATRE ROYALE DE LA MONNAIE. FACTS ARE THESE:

A. BELGIUM'S INTERNATIONALLY REKNOWN BEJART BALLET
(ALSO CALLED "BALLET OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY")
SCHEDULED OPEN NYC INTERNATIONAL BICENTENNIAL MONTH
WITH JUNE 2 PERFORMANCE AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN. JUNE 2
DATE WORKED OUT BETWEEN HUISMAN AND MICHAEL BIRTH,
CHAIRMAN OF MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, FOLLOWING LENGTHY
NEGOTIATIONS BEGUN OVER YEAR AGO, AND IN COURSE OF WHICH
BEJART BALLET FORCED TO LIMIT NEW YORK PROGRAM TO JUST
ONE PERFORMANCE. FOR JUNE 2 ENGAGEMENT, MORE THAN 8,000
TICKETS HAVE BEEN SOLD OR DISTRIBUTED BY NYC BICEN-
TENNIAL COMMITTEE AND EXTENSIVE TV COVERAGE PLANNED.

B. BIRTH CALLED HUISMAN TODAY AND INFORMED HIM
JUNE 2 PERFORMANCE MUST BE CANCELLED SINCE CONTRACTOR
FOR DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WANTED TO
START CONSTRUCTION ON JUNE 1 FOR DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION.
BIRTH TOLD HUISMAN THAT CALL "FROM US AMBASSADOR OR
SOME APPROPRIATE PERSON" TO ROBERT STRAUS,
DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, MIGHT SUCCEED
IN DELAYING START OF CONSTRUCTION UNTIL JUNE 3.

C. IN ADDITION TO CALL ON EMBASSY, HUISMAN HAS DIS-
CUSSED PROBLEM WITH BELGIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

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LATTER HAS INSTRUCTED BELGIAN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON

TO RAISE ISSUE WITH STRAUS.

2. EMBASSY SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES CERTAIN TO RESULT IF BEJART BALLETT FORCED ACCEPT CANCELLATION JUNE 2 OPENING IN NYC. OF THE VARIOUS BELGIAN INITIATIVES IN US INTENDED COMMEMORATE OUR BICENTENNIAL, BELGIAN GOVERNMENT ASSIGNS HIGHEST PRIORITY TO ITS NATIONALLY-LOVED AND INTERNATIONALLY-ACCLAIMED BEJART BALLETT. OPENING PERFORMANCE ON JUNE 2 WILL BE UNDER SPONSORSHIP HIS MAJESTY KING BAUDOUIN, TO WHICH ROYAL FAMILY HAS BEEN INVITED AND PRINCESS PAOLA LIKELY ATTEND.

3. EMBASSY BELIEVES PERSONAL CALL FROM YOU TO ROBERT STRAUS EXPLAINING OUR CONCERN AND THAT OF BELGIAN GOVERNMENT OFFERS SOLE OPPORTUNITY SALVAGE NYC OPENING PERFORMANCE. PLEASE ADVISE. RENNER

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